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SUBJECT: GOMA NOTES: 04/12/08 - NORTH KIVU "GOMA" SPOILERS

¶11. (SBU) Summary: For the last few weeks, there has been ferment within and among the North Kivu armed groups, particularly among those best known for close ties to the FDLR. This message is based on reports of conversations between a MONUC military officer and some of these groups, and a talk between USAID Goma liaison officers and Clovis Munihire (protect), the North Kivu governor's liaison with armed groups and newly-appointed permanent secretary of the (as-yet-unformed) Amani Peace and Reconciliation Commission. The questions at hand: are there Acte d'Engagement spoilers among the North Kivu armed groups? If so, should the Facilitation try to engage with them? If yes, how? This message raises these questions, but does not answer them -- we need to learn more first. End summary.

PARECO: Fragmenting? Reconfiguring?

¶12. (SBU) PARECO, or people claiming to speak for it, has been threatening to withdraw from the Goma process since the appointment of Firmin Mathe, of its Nande branch, to a largely ceremonial post as a member of the Technical Harmonization Bureau (BTH) of the Joint Technical Commission on Peace and Security. The noisiest agitator on this has been "Museveni," of the Hutu branch, who holds the title of PARECO "president" and who is the Hutu branch's focal point in Goma.

¶13. (SBU) Museveni was arrested April 4 in connection with an alleged plot to induce the defection of Hutu FARDC units, perhaps to form a new Hutu militia. He was released the next morning, evidently in order to head off a PARECO withdrawal from the Goma process on the eve of the April 6 inauguration of the Peace and Security Commission. Museveni is still agitating, and threatening to take PARECO and other Mai-Mai groups (perhaps Kifuafua, Vurondo or Kasindien) with him, using the BTH issue as a pretext.

¶14. (SBU) There is no question that filling the BTH slot was poorly handled by the Amani leadership. There is an analogous issue in South Kivu -- in both cases, the armed groups' consensus nominees were given other Amani jobs and their BTH slots were arbitrarily filled by somebody else. However, this is clearly not the whole issue, as shown by Museveni's arrest (along with several Hutu officers, who as far as we know are still detained).

¶15. (SBU) PARECO -- especially its Hutu core under Commander Mugabo -- is by all accounts an FDLR proxy, created and supported by the GDRC/FARDC, or at least by elements therein.

¶16. (SBU) Munihire maintains that: a) many or most PARECO fighters are in fact themselves FDLR; and b) these and other FDLR fighters (or at least their cadres) continue, or continued until very recently, to receive GDRC financial support. He is aware of monthly

salary payments being made to them at least through October 2007. The middlemen on these payments are North Kivu National Assembly deputies in Kinshasa.

¶ 17. (SBU) The ferment induced by the Nairobi process within the FDLR (withdrawals from many areas, signs of anxiety, or at least of changed tactics, as a result of the March 15 date signaled for military operations, the UNSC resolution, etc.) seems to be having an knock-on effect on PARECO. They feel exposed, and are probably less at ease than ever with the Goma process. The problems thus go far beyond the seemingly-trivial issue of the seat on the BTH, though the latter does reflect what PARECO Hutu see as a symptom of an unwelcome pro-Nande political tilt in the national government's approach to North Kivu affairs. The appointment of Abbe Apollinaire Malumalu (a Nande from the Grand-Nord) as Amani national coordinator is a far stronger sign of this, in their eyes.

¶ 18. (SBU) The issue has created strains between PARECO-Mugabo (Hutu, the main force) and PARECO-La Fontaine (Nande, much smaller; Firmin Mathe is La Fontaine's brother).

¶ 19. (SBU) MONUC is planning a trip to Mugabo's headquarters in Rutshuru. Members of the International Facilitation will accompany. The ostensible purpose will be to verify whether Museveni is indeed empowered to act for PARECO (or at least PARECO-Hutu) with respect to issues such as withdrawal threats, to express strong disapproval of such tactics, and to discuss the issue of the BTH slot.

¶ 10. (SBU) The Facilitation plans to use this opportunity to insist on the importance of PARECO's remaining in the Goma process and to point out that, with Nairobi pressures increasing in the coming months, it will be important for PARECO to rethink its overall position with respect to both processes, since UNSC resolutions and other sanctions will increasingly put pressures on FDLR: PARECO has

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no interest in being associated in any way with FDLR, and any association can only bring diminishing returns. We will report septel on this trip, which is scheduled for April 19.

¶ 11. (SBU) Comment: Nairobi-related stresses may be causing a strategic rethink within PARECO-Mugabo and more broadly by militias that retain close ties with FDLR (which is most of them). This could lead to some kind of fragmentation/realignment involving existing or, potentially, new Hutu militias. This would be a bad outcome all around, but particularly for the Goma process. PARECO might remain on paper as a nominal coalition (with Hutu, Nande, Hunde and far-smaller and perhaps only notional Tembo and Nyanga components) with a seat at the table in the Amani Program, but there could be a realignment on the ground and an expanding disconnect between any PARECO delegation to the JTCPS and any actual armed units. The Peace and Security Commission could end up integrating/DDRing supernumerary PARECO, etc. units just as new Hutu militias form -- a very bad outcome indeed. End comment.

Other Forces

¶ 12. (SBU) It is known that not all armed groups in North Kivu are within the Goma process. Two of these are, according to Munihire, of particular concern as potential spoilers:

-- "Axe Nyabyondo:" A Hunde militia in the highlands and along the escarpment northwest of Masisi town. This group is closely involved with FDLR units, who accept the authority of the Hunde traditional chiefs and are allowed in return to share in the local mining of coltan and gold. This is an obscure group, but it has particular potential as a spoiler because of its control of a key Masisi axis and, again, because of its control of significant income streams. There is a MONUC mobile operating base (MOB) at Nyabyondo, but it is very isolated, and there is little or no contact between this militia and MONUC or others.

-- In fact, "Axe Nyabyondo's" main point of contact with the outside world is through a North National Assembly deputy and former provincial vice governor, Bakungu Mithondeke, in Kinshasa, who was

present for the Goma conference but refused to sign the Acte d'Engagement. Munihire, himself a Hunde, feels that it is time for some kind of contact with Bakungu by which the increasing perils of involvement with FDLR and of continued isolation from and refusal of the Goma process can be made clear. (Comment: We would need verification of Munihire's assertions and some further research into local issues before any such initiative could be credibly undertaken. End comment.)

-- Grand-Nord hold-outs: Again per Munihire, there are still significant Nande armed units which have no direct link to any of the Goma signatories. They are, again, associated with FDLR -- there may be as many as 3,000. More needs to be learned about them, and about their links to the outside world. For now, they should be considered potentially dangerous free radicals.

¶13. (SBU) Comment: This last point ties directly into concerns about the effectiveness (or lack thereof) of the public-information efforts being conducted by Foreign Minister Mbusa Nyamwisi (also a Nande): to what extent are Nande allies or proxies of the FDLR being made aware of the increased emphasis on and momentum behind Nairobi, let alone the FDLR themselves? No one seems to know. More on this soon. End comment.

GARVELINK